

VZCZCXYZ0001
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHHE #0355/01 1171128
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 271128Z APR 06
FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1797
RULSJGA/COMDT COGARD WASHINGTON DC//G-CI//
INFO RUEGABF/COGARD MIO EUROPE ROTTERDAM NL
RHEFHLC/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC
RHFJUSC/USCUSTOMS WASHDC
RUEAIAO/HQ ICE IAO WASHINGTON DC
RULSDMK/DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION WASHDC

UNCLAS HELSINKI 000355

SIPDIS

DHS FOR US COAST GUARD PORT SECURITY DIRECTORATE
DHS FOR TSA-INTL AFFAIRS
ICE FOR FOREIGN OPS DIVISION
CBP FOR OIA-KTHOMSEN
DOT FOR MARAD

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PTER](#) [PHSA](#) [EWWT](#) [SENV](#) [IMO](#) [FI](#)
SUBJECT: HIGHLIGHTS OF ADMIRAL COLLINS VISIT TO FINLAND,
MARCH 28 - April 1, 2006

1. (U) Admiral Thomas Collins, Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, visited Finland, March 28 - April 1, 2006. Finnish Chief of the Border Guard, Vice Admiral Jaakko Smolander, was the host of the visit. The Admiral's itinerary included meetings with senior GoF officials, briefings by the Finnish Border Guard (FBG), and visits to operational units in Helsinki, on the Russian border and West coast.

THE FINNISH APPROACH TO BORDER CONTROL

2. (SBU) An introductory meeting at FBG headquarters on 28 March provided Admiral Collins and the Ambassador an overview of Finnish border control threat perspectives and strategy. From the Finnish perspective, the primary border threat areas are the Mediterranean and, in the future, from the Balkans. There is strong migrant pressure from North Africa into Spain and the Canary Islands; and cocaine smuggling from South America. Border security in southern European countries is hindered by the absence of a coast guard function; coastal security there is usually a national police responsibility. FBG noted that illegal migrants and criminals do not travel through Russia and Belarus, since the route is longer and more dangerous. Trafficking in persons (TIP) is a problem, but Finland is primarily a transit country. The largest problem is presented by people who apply for asylum and then disappear. Admiral Collins noted that the USG is aware of and commends Finland for its progress against TIP.

3. (SBU) Finland's four-tier approach to border security consists of (1) posting consular and liaison officers in other countries; notably, as of 1 April, one Border Guard officer will be serving in the Finnish Embassy in Beijing; (2) cooperating with neighboring countries' border, customs and police; (3) conducting border and customs control (border control consists of surveillance plus checks at crossing points); (4) conducting domestic activities pertaining to alien control.

4. (SBU) EU countries in the Schengen area have no controls at internal borders, but border control remains a national competence and responsibility. Admiral Collins observed that this arrangement creates seams, making the EU only as safe as its weakest link. Admiral Collins questioned whether this arrangement was creating pressure for more integrated solutions, such as a European Coast Guard. Smolander said such a concept had been discussed, but that the member states believe that border control is a national responsibility and cannot be shared.

5. (SBU) During the briefing, FBG noted that the GoF intends to propose a common EU border strategy calling for increased transparency of the border through risk analysis and inspections, interagency cooperation, joint resources and readiness for operations, and improved liaison and operations with neighboring and source countries. Smolander said that Germany and the Netherlands would probably support the proposal. Admiral Collins noted that a common surveillance system is the key to transparency; joint resources are best employed through deployable, common units; and military-law enforcement cooperation is essential.

MEETING AT THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR

6. (SBU) In a 29 March meeting with Finnish Minister of the Interior, Kari Rajamaki, the Minister and the Admiral

discussed Finnish and U.S. threats and security perspectives. (The Ambassador did not attend this meeting). Minister Rajamaki said illegal immigration is an increasing problem that is regarded as a human rights issue within the EU; and trafficking in persons is a global crime that has surpassed the illegal drug trade. Admiral Collins said that immigration -- which is a major issue in the U.S.

-- is a complex, global issue; and that regional and multilateral solutions are needed to help build global understanding. The Admiral noted that accountability and transparency are essential for security. For the maritime, the USG is seeking a strong audit mechanism -- such as what currently exists for the aviation community; as well as an international system for Long Range Identification and Tracking of vessels. Admiral Collins said that for the U.S. 9/11 was a transformational event, that the USG cannot approach security unilaterally -- regional and global partnerships are essential. Rajamaki noted that the Madrid bombing was a transformational event for Europe, and affirmed that the GoF wants to be involved in strengthening these international security ties.

MEETING AT THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS
(MINTC)

17. (SBU) For Admiral Collins meeting at MINTC, Finnish attendees included Juhani Korpela (Permanent Secretary, MINTC), Silja Ruokala (International Affairs, MINTC), Rauli Parnes (Security, MINTC), Jari Gron (Logistics, MINTC), Paavo Wihuri (Maritime Safety/Security, Finnish Maritime Administration). (The Ambassador did not attend this briefing). Korpela noted that transportation security is a priority item on the Finnish agenda, and the GoF plans to address it through the Security and Safety in Global Intermodal Transport program. Korpela also offered that it may be of interest to the USG to learn more about Finnish icebreaking capabilities. Wihuri noted that Finnish ports conduct background checks on each employee. Truck drivers are escorted as they drive trucks on boats.

18. (SBU) Admiral Collins outlined USCG responsibilities, and noted that the USCG has been active within the IMO on safety and security, particularly ISPS. USCG wants to partner robustly around the world, and it is in everybody's interest to ensure the regime is working. Sub-standard ships must be prohibited; and the USCG looks to countries like Finland to be aggressive and to exchange best practices. Domestic legislation requires USCG to visit trading partners to see how they are implementing port security.

19. (SBU) Admiral Collins said that the current USCG agenda includes a formal port assessment for Finland in 2007, and that we welcome the Finns to see our ports in the US. The USCG is working with China to help other nations develop security in their transportation systems. If there are possibilities to do that in Europe with Finland, USG is interested, particularly with regard to West Africa. USCG may look into replacing two icebreakers that are nearing the end of their lifecycles. There is a national debate on who will build the icebreakers and who will pay for them.

BRIEFING FOR MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

10. (SBU) Admiral Collins provided a USCG overview briefing to Finnish MPs Jari Vilen (Grand Committee, chairman), Kimmo Kiljunen (Grand Committee, vice chairman), Eero Akaan-Penttila (Grand Committee), Veijo Puhjo (Administrative Committee, vice-chairman) and Lauri Oinonen (Administrative Committee). (The Ambassador did not attend this briefing). The Admiral observed that the lack of clarity in IMO positions between the European Commission and individual countries made it difficult to develop a common approach to common issues; and underscored the purpose of LRIT, the importance of establishing an ICAO type of audit mechanism for IMO, and the need for greater transparency and accountability.

11. (SBU) Vilen said he was pleased to hear the Admiral emphasize multilateral approaches, noting that previous unilateral USG actions had made it difficult to work with

the Administration. Vilen said the U.S. is Finland's most important partner, noting that the EU is in a pause following the defeat of the EU constitution and that the elections in France would have a huge effect on the EU. Vilen believes the EU must have a common approach to security matters; but because the EU is not a federal state, larger countries (Vilen noted France, UK, Germany, Spain, Poland) might have different ideas. Since terrorism is also a threat in Finland -- the willingness to cooperate internationally is growing. Vilen cited Finland's assistance during a recent oil slick in Estonian waters for which Estonia had not requested assistance; and the Police, Customs and Border Guard cooperation as a model that the GoF is seeking to introduce elsewhere.

FIELD SITE VISITS DEMONSTRATE FINNISH MODELS FOR
INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

¶12. (SBU) Following the policy-level meetings in Helsinki, Admiral Collins, joined by the Ambassador, visited various field sites to obtain first-hand understanding of Border Guard operations and highlight areas of interagency cooperation.

¶13. (SBU) On Thursday, 30 March, the delegation visited the Gulf of Finland Coast Guard Command Center in Helsinki and the Pelkola border crossing point on the Russian border; and participated in a snowmobile patrol along the Russian border. The visit to the Coast Guard Command Center demonstrated the close operational level coordination among the FBG, the Finnish Navy and the Finnish Maritime Administration (FMA). The FBG and FMA are collocated in the same building and on the same floor. All three maritime authorities contribute data to build a single, unified maritime operational picture and can draw on this picture as the basis for conducting activities. Later, at the Pelkola border crossing point, the delegation received presentations about (1) FBG border checkpoint procedures that include the use of an EU-wide database to verify the identity of potential criminals; (2) methods and equipment Finland uses for detecting fraudulent documents; and (3) the working-level cooperation between Finnish police and customs officials.

¶14. (SBU) On Friday, 31 March, the delegation visited the Western Finland Coast Guard District, and received briefings on the FBG Air Patrol unit in Turku. Later the delegation embarked the renovated FBG ship, TURSAS, for a brief underway period in the Port of Turku that included an overview of ISPS implementation by the port director.

¶15. (SBU) On Saturday, 1 April, just before departure, the Admiral received an overview briefing on the Police, Customs and Border Guard unit at the Helsinki-Vantaa international airport. (The Ambassador did not attend this briefing).

FUTURE USCG-FBG COOPERATION

¶16. (SBU) Admiral Collins' visit provides a solid foundation for future USG-GoF cooperation on a range of security issues. Admiral Collins and Vice Admiral Smolander discussed potential areas for future USCG-FBG professional exchange. Post looks forward to working with the USCG to advance both USCG-FBG cooperation and bilateral and EU policy objectives involving the USCG.

WARE